

127 Kings Road



DESIGNATION REPORT

January 22, 2020

Landmark Preservation Commission

Palm Beach, Florida

DESIGNATION REPORT

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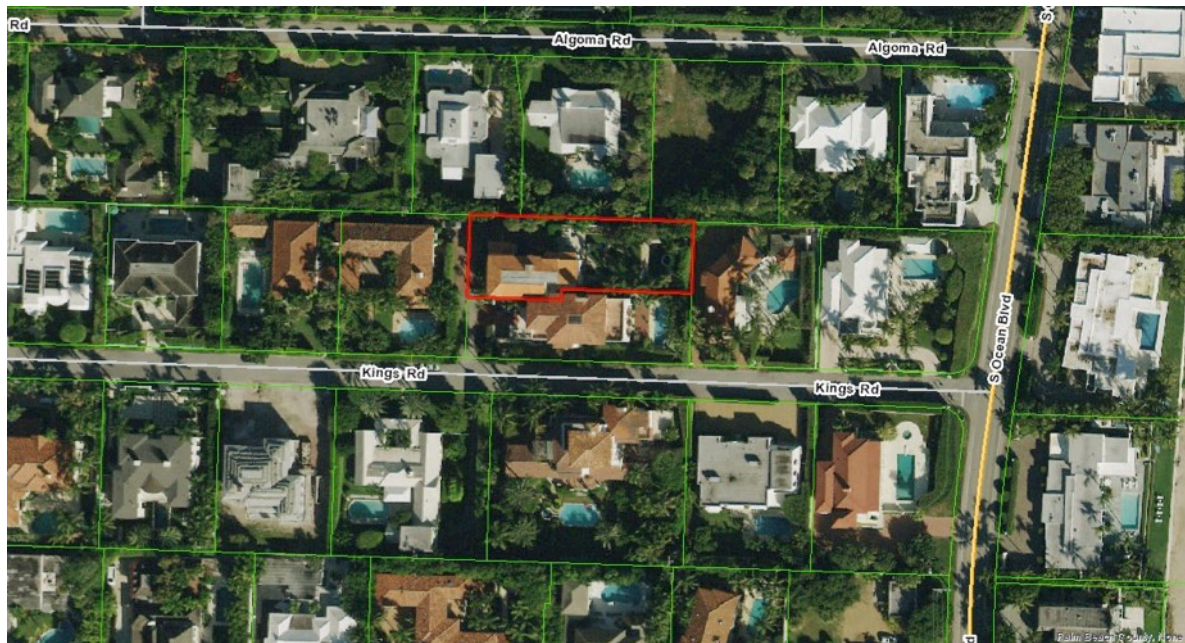
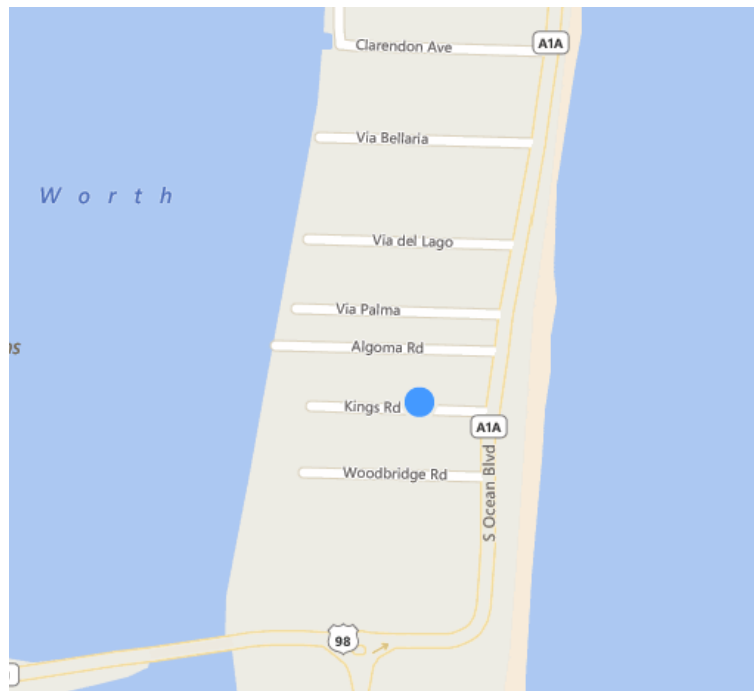
Report produced by Murphy Stillings, LLC

I. General Information

Location:	127 Kings Road Palm Beach, Florida
Date of Construction:	1927
Historic Name:	Cielito Lindo
Current Name:	Casa Serena
First Owner:	John P. and Jessie Donahue
Architect:	Original - Marion Sims Wyeth
Contractor:	William Watts, Jr.; Watts and Sinclair
Architect of Subdivided Estate:	Byron Simonson
Contractor of Subdivided Estate:	Smith, Yetter & Griffin
Present Owner:	Angie McNamara and James McNamara
Present Use:	Residential
Present Zoning:	R-A
Palm Beach County Tax Folio Number:	50-43-43-35-04-000-0040
Current Legal Description:	Boulevard Estates Palm Beach Lot 4

II. Location Map

127 Kings Road



III. Architectural Information

At a time when many of the extravagant oceanfront estates in Palm Beach were being torn down due to changing desires in the size and styles of residences, an important architectural and preservation achievement took place at the notable Cielito Lindo estate of James and Jessie Donahue. Designed by Marion Sims Wyeth and constructed in 1927 by the firm of Watt & Sinclair, Cielito Lindo was a Mediterranean Revival style masterpiece with Spanish and Moorish influences. In 1946, Jessie Woolworth Donahue sold the massive 45,000 square foot, 125 room estate and architect Byron Simonson devised a plan to subdivide the property into nineteen lots and divide the stately home into five separate residences. One of the residences created from this preservation effort was 127 Kings Road.

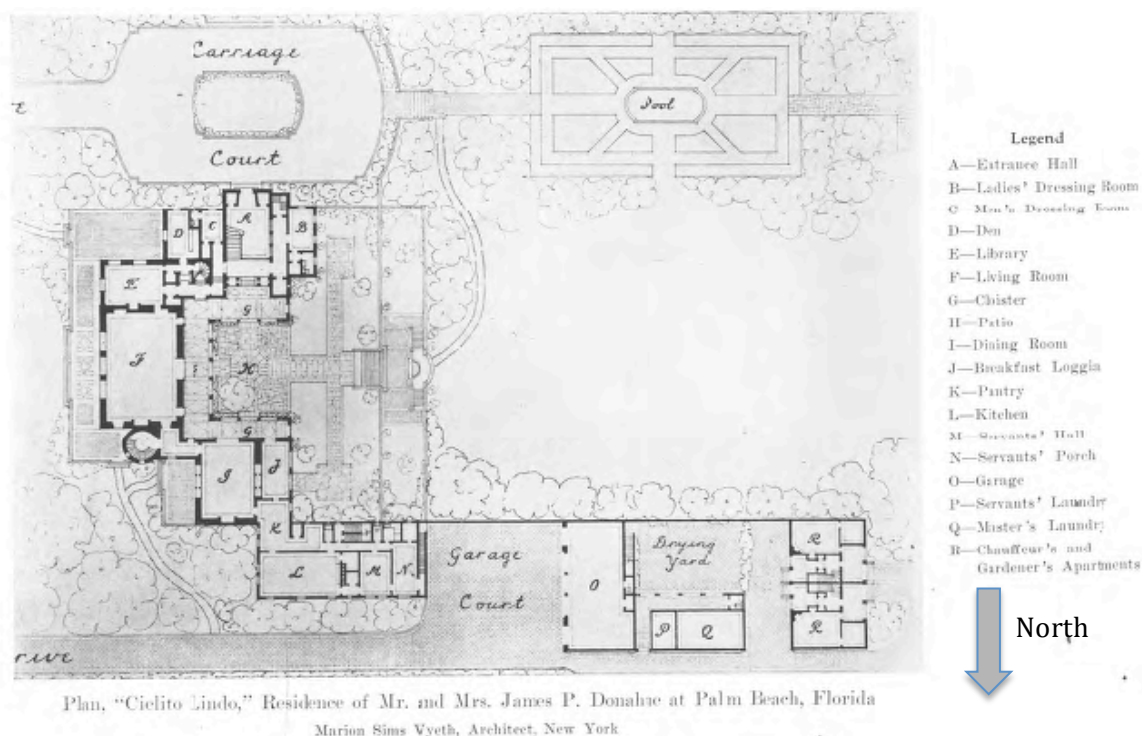


Cielito Lindo's West Facade

Cielito Lindo, as designed by Wyeth, was an excellent example of the Mediterranean Revival style of architecture that was popular in Palm Beach during the Land Boom of the 1920s. The Mediterranean Revival style is an eclectic style incorporating architectural elements derived from the area around the Mediterranean Sea including Spanish, Italian and Moorish elements. The style is found most frequently in states that have a Spanish Colonial heritage, but

its use gained national popularity after the Pan-American Exhibition held in San Diego in 1915. In Palm Beach, the style was first popularized in 1919 by Addison Mizner's design for the Everglades Club. The popularity of the style soared in the 1920s for both commercial and residential buildings. The style remained a pervasive influence on building design until World War II. Buildings of this style are often decorated with ornate cast-stone columns, pilasters and window surrounds. Arched openings, balconies, asymmetrical massing and windows of varying sizes and shapes are also common features. In addition, stone or stucco facades, decorative wrought ironwork, tile floors, pecky cypress ceilings and clay barrel tile roofs are typical features of Mediterranean Revival style buildings.

Cielito Lindo was constructed of hollow clay tile and brick surfaced with stucco with barrel tile surfaced hip roofs with exposed rafters. The residence's most significant exterior features included the Moorish influenced brick railings, bands, and arches, geometric interlaced wood details, and a three-story tower.



The subdivision of the Cielito Lindo estate in 1947 included creating five separate residences with Kings Road running thru the middle of the original residence. Byron Simonson redesigned the partitioned structures into fully functional single-family houses.

127 Kings Road was originally the estate's culinary wing, which was located in the northern wing of the stately home. The culinary wing included the kitchen, pantry, servants' hall and servants' porch and it has been noted that the fireplace of 127 Kings Road was originally the estate's incinerator flu. In Simonson's design for the new house he retained many of the character-defining elements from Cielito Lindo's original design including windows, doors, decorative wood balconies, ornamental brick chimney and barrel tile roofing with exposed rafters.



Southwest Corner of the Residence, Looking Northeast

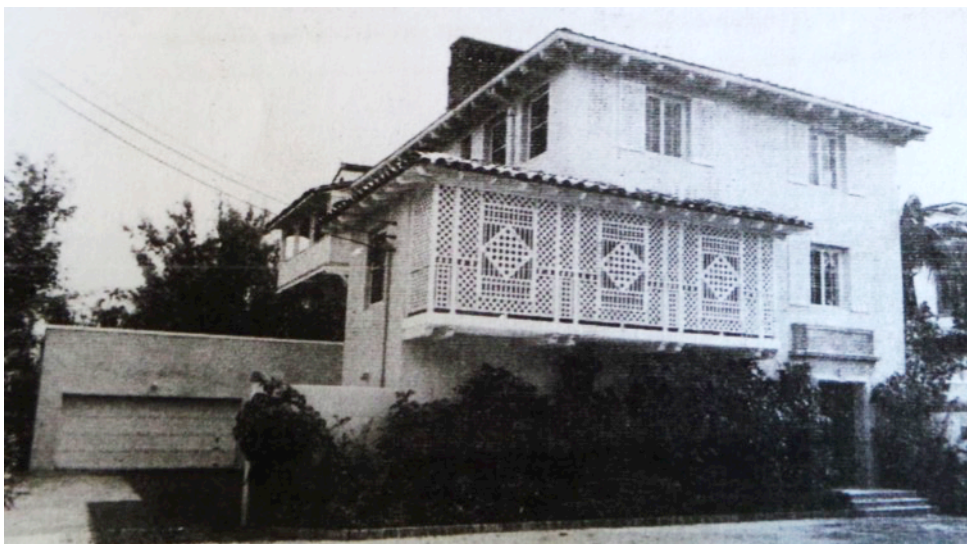
127 Kings Road is a three-story residence located on an interior lot. An access easement leads from Kings Road and runs north along the west side of the lot that houses 123 Kings Road to provide access to the residence. The main façade and entrance to the residence face west with the entry consisting of a large decorative wood door. The door and frame were from one of Cielito Lindo's powder rooms and a stucco door surround was designed by Simonson to highlight the entrance. A canvas awning now shelters the entryway.

Simonson retained many of Cielito Lindo's original multi-light casement windows, double-hung sash windows and doors and added colonial style shutters. The fireplace of the home was originally the estate's incinerator flu and the decorative brick chimney is a character-defining feature of the residence.



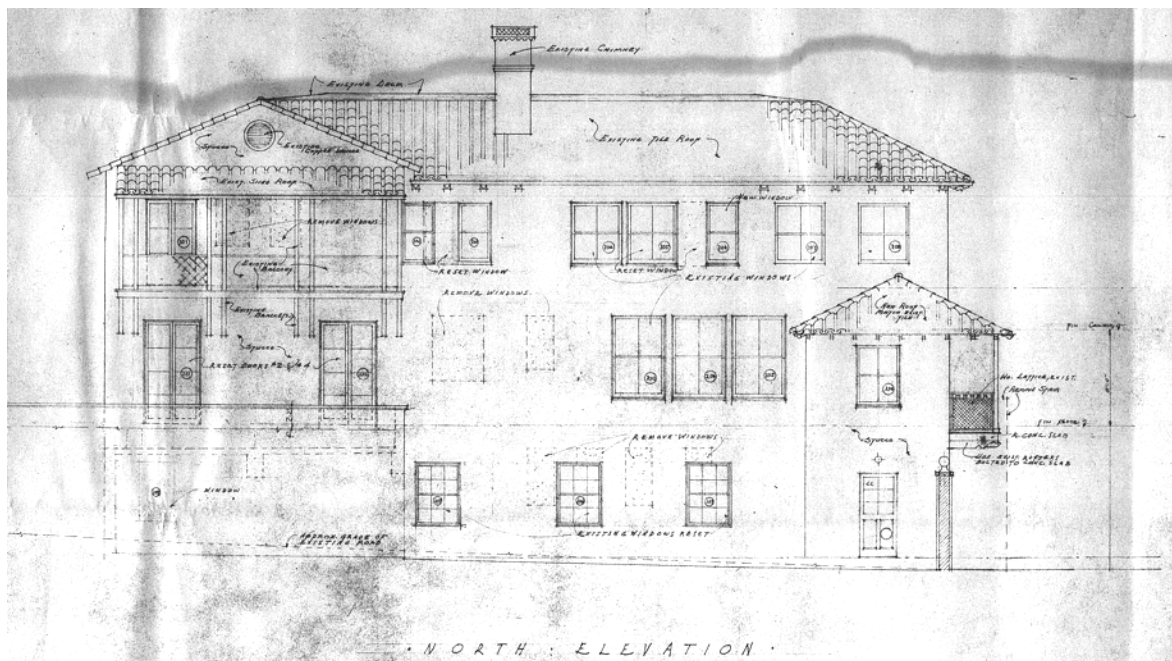
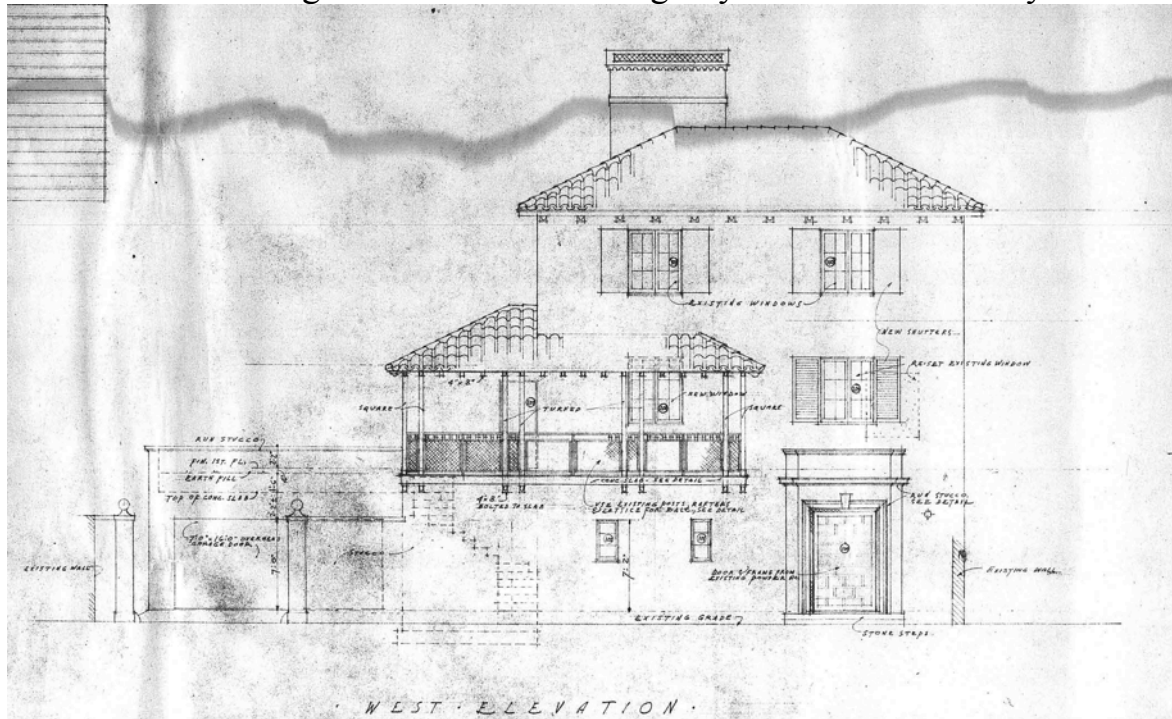
West Facade

In reconfiguring the kitchen wing of Cielito Lindo into a residence, Simonson made a few additions to the structure in 1947 including a one-story two-car garage at the northeast corner and a small stairway at the northwest corner of the residence. A wrap around balcony with a hipped barrel tile roof was added to the 2nd floor above the stairway addition. While this balcony was an addition, Simonson re-used posts, decorative lattice and rafters from the original Cielito Lindo estate to create the balcony. A second balcony, located on the third floor of the north façade, is an original feature at this location. The geometric interlaced wood details of the balconies are significant character defining features of the residence and its history as a part of Cielito Lindo.



Historic Image of 127 Kings Road (date unknown)
Located in the house file at the Preservation Foundation of Palm Beach

127 Kings Road - 1947 Drawings By Simonson & Holley



According to the Town of Palm Beach's building permits, alterations to the house since the 1947 partitioning have been few. They include interior renovations, elevator installation, pool installation, landscape and hardscape changes, and ordinary repair and maintenance.¹

¹ Town of Palm Beach Building permits from 1927-2019.

IV. Historical Information

The residence at 127 Kings Road was originally part of one of Palm Beach's finest estates, Cielito Lindo. The 45,000 square foot mansion was built for Jessie Woolworth Donahue and her husband James P. Donahue as a winter retreat on a large 300-foot wide lake to ocean parcel of land located between what is now Woodbridge Road and Algoma Road. Cielito Lindo, meaning "A Little Piece of Heaven", was designed by Marion Sims Wyeth and constructed by Watt and Sinclair in 1927 for a cost of \$2 million dollars.

By World War I, Henry Flagler had established Palm Beach as the winter capital of American high society. Most came by rail and stayed for the early January to February 22nd season at one of Flagler's luxury hotels, the Royal Poinciana or the Breakers. However, following World War I, this practice shifted as the season became longer and many of the society's wealthy built grand mansions along the ocean and lake. The early architect of choice was Addison Mizner who had come to Palm Beach with Paris Singer in 1918 and designed Singer's Mediterranean Revival-style Everglades Club in 1918-1919. The club not only became the new center of social life for Palm Beach's wealthiest and most socially prominent residents, but it also introduced Mizner's Mediterranean Revival style to the island. Society leaders Eva and Edward Stotesbury were the first to commission Mizner to design a grand Mediterranean Revival style estate for their winter residence. The resulting El Mirasol, on a vast oceanfront property, provided a superb setting for Eva Stotesbury's extensive entertaining and "confirmed both Eva's status as society queen and Mizner's status as a fashionable architect."² With El Mirasol setting the precedent, owning a fashionable Mediterranean Revival-style estate became a symbol of prestige and a place to entertain for Palm Beach's and affluent winter residents.

James P. Donahue and his wife Jessie Woolworth Donahue started spending the winter season in Palm Beach in the early 1920s, arriving in their lavish private railcar, Japauldon, and staying at the Everglades Club where they entertained extensively.³ Jessie Woolworth Donahue was the youngest of three daughters of Franklin Winfield Woolworth, the five-and-dime store magnate who was one of the wealthiest men in America at the time of his death in 1919. When her

² Donald Curl, *Palm Beach County: An Illustrated History*. Windsor Publications Inc., 1986.

³ Japauldon was named for James Paul Donahue.

mother, Jennie Creighton Woolworth, died in 1921, Jessie and her sister Helena Woolworth McCann and her niece Barbara Hutton, shared in the huge fortune.⁴

The early 1920s was a period of tremendous growth in the Town of Palm Beach. The Island had become the winter resort of America's most influential families and the building boom was radically changing the face of the small community. Though Ocean Boulevard was complete by 1920 most of the land west of the road was covered with jungles of rugged palms. During the Land Boom, much of the land was transformed into grand Palm Beach estates designed by architects to suit their wealthy clients' extravagant tastes and lavish lifestyles.

Marjorie Merriweather Post had been vacationing in Palm Beach since the early 1900's, having stayed at the Royal Poinciana Hotel and The Breakers with her first husband Edward Bennett Close.⁵ By 1920, she had inherited a vast fortune from her cereal-tycoon father C.W. Post, married her second husband, Edward Francis "E.F." Hutton and was eager to build her own estate where she could spend the winter season and entertain. While the Hutton's were looking for property on Golfview Road to build their estate, they met Marion Sims Wyeth, a New York architect who had moved to Palm Beach the previous year. According to reports from the time, "When the sun had set on Golfview Road that day, the Hutton's had hired Wyeth to build them a home on a plot of land they had purchased that afternoon from Paris Singer's Ocean and Lake Realty Company, launching Wyeth into a lifelong career of villa-building in the resort."⁶ By the 1921 winter season, the Hutton's were established in Hogarcito, their new Spanish-style house fronting the Everglades Club golf course.⁷ However, even after a large addition by Wyeth in 1923, the house was too small for the Marjorie's entertaining, so she called upon Wyeth again to design a palatial estate further south on an ocean to lake property that four years later would become Mar-a-Lago.⁸

⁴ Jessie's sister Edna Woolworth (1883-1917) married Franklyn Laws Hutton, brother of E.F. Hutton and a financial advisor to her father. They had one child, Barbara Hutton. Edna died in 1917 when Barbara was just five years old. Jessie Woolworth Donahue was a sister-in-law of Marjorie Merriweather Post, who had been married to E.F. Hutton (1920-1935), and Barbara Hutton was a niece of both women.

⁵ Marjorie Merriweather Post divorced Edward Bennett Close in 1919 and married E.F. Hutton in 1920.

⁶ Shirley Johnson, Palm Beach Houses. New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1991; p. 290.

⁷ "Hogarcito, Palm Beach - Historic Home for Sale." Palm Beach Daily News 11 September 2009. According to historian Donald Curl, "Hogarcito was the first house to be built on Golfview Road. Many of the other houses were built because Marjorie Merriweather Post (at that time Mrs. E.F. Hutton) wanted to populate the street with what she called, 'young marrieds,' which is how she saw herself. Mr. and Mrs. Charles McCann (Helena Woolworth) were one of the 'young marrieds' who bought a Wyeth house on Golfview Road."

⁸ Marion Sims Wyeth drew the basic plans for Mar-a-Lago but Marjorie Merriweather Post wanted something more grand and extravagant so she hired Austrian architect Joseph Urban to create a dramatic 115-room villa.

The South Florida Land and Building Boom reached its height in late 1925, but by 1926, the “Boom Times” were ending as speculation had pushed prices so high that speculators and developers could no longer find buyers and many banks in the state failed. However, while much of South Florida suffered from this real estate bust, the Palm Beach winter colonists and real estate on the island was not dramatically affected. A February 27, 1927 Palm Beach Times article titled, “Much Activity Indicated in New Projects: Several Homes to be Built at Resort” addressed this issue:

“Every indication that there will be plenty of activity in the building trades in Palm Beach during the coming summer is evidenced in the announcement of a number of private homes and apartments to be constructed in the winter colony. The announcement of increased building activity comes as encouraging to many tradesmen who feared that with the completion of the Bath and Tennis Club, the Sunrise Theatre building, the Oasis Club and other places there would be a big cessation in building and that many men would be jobless. The Donahue house along Ocean Boulevard will be the largest to be built during the coming year.”⁹

As Mar-a-Lago was being completed, James and Jessie Donahue hired Wyeth to design a grand estate for them on a sprawling ocean-to-lake lot they had purchased a few years earlier just one block north of Mar-a-Lago. A January 19, 1927, Palm Beach Post article titled, “Work Started On New Oceanfront Palm Beach Home; Strip Near Hutton’s is Site of New Residence; Contractor Brings Huge Crew from North to Construct Mansion Here,” describes the beginning of Cielito Lindo:

“Ground was broken and work started yesterday on the foundations of the new James P. Donahue home, which is to be located on a 300-foot wide strip of land between the lake and the ocean, just north of the Charles W. Copp estate, near the new Bath and Tennis Club and the Edward F. Hutton mansion (Mar-a-Lago). The Donahue home, which is to be the permanent winter abode of Mr. and Mrs. Donahue, regular Palm Beach residents, will be one of the most interesting additions to the Ocean boulevard residences and is to be located along one of the loveliest stretches of beach. Watts and Sinclair, contractors, who have been in charge of construction work for Mr. Donahue in the north, arrived in Palm Beach with a large crew and began work yesterday on the foundations. Mr. and

⁹ “Permits Nearly Two Million in Colony.” Palm Beach Post, 1 January 1928. While West Palm Beach and Palm Beach during the year of 1927 were absorbing the great number of hotels, apartment and public buildings which shot up in the proceeding years, in Palm Beach a number of winter residents have been busy constructing new homes or adding to their estates. As a result of this activity, building permit totals for Palm Beach have kept pace with those of 1926. For 1927, the permits totaled \$1,691,699 and in 1926 \$1,888,200.

Mrs. Donahue are to arrive Monday for the final consultation with Marion Sims Wyeth, Palm Beach architect who is designing the house. They visited Palm Beach early in December to confer with Mr. Wyeth and are arriving now to occupy their apartment at the Everglades Club and superintend the early stages of the building.

Like most Palm Beach houses built by Mr. Wyeth, the architecture is decidedly Spanish in feeling and influence and the dominant feature will be the patio facing west and overlooking the lake with a glass terrace above it. The house will have the usual features of Palm Beach villas with a large 30x50 living room, a library, a 22' x 35' dining room opening into a conservatory, breakfast room, six master bedroom suites and sleeping porches. The usual kitchen and servant's rooms are in the rear together with a garage and a chauffeur's house. The house is to be complete with every small detail that affords comfort and luxury... Mr. Wyeth adds this home to his already notable list of Palm Beach houses."

The Donahue's wished to occupy their house for the 1927-1928 winter season, so Watts and Sinclair, Inc. brought a "small army of workmen" to construct the house.¹⁰ Just eleven months after the foundation was laid, Cielito Lindo was ready for occupancy. Newspaper articles bestowed accolades upon Cielito Lindo, describing it as "the magnificent new home that has taken its place among the show places of Palm Beach."¹¹

In addition to the house, the elaborate estate grounds received extensive praise in newspaper and magazine articles. Designed by Lewis & Valentine of Long Island, the grounds included many lush gardens with magnificent plantings and rare flowers creating a "wonderland of tropical beauty."¹² In addition to the exquisite gardens and stunning landscaping, the grounds included a multi-car garage, a chauffeur's and gardener's house, a tennis court, a boathouse, an orchid house, orange groves, a tea pavilion, a lily pond and numerous stone

¹⁰ "Donahue House on Boulevard Nearly Ready: Mr. and Mrs. Donahue, with Two Sons, Expected to Arrive December 22 for the Christmas Holidays." Palm Beach Daily News, 16 December 1927.

The palatial Palm Beach home on South Ocean Boulevard of James P. Donahue of No. 6 East 80th Street, New York City, will be complete and ready for occupancy on December 22, according to the announcement yesterday of Marion Sims Wyeth, architect in charge and designer of the Spanish type residence. With the last of the building work, supervised by Watt and Sinclair, Inc., New York contractors, drawing near, the small army of workmen who were employed on the grounds when the contract was let last February has now dwindled to about 50 men.

¹¹ Palm Beach Daily News 16 December 1927.

¹² "Donahue Estate a Wonderland of Beauty; Gardens Replete With Rarest Flowers." Palm Beach Post 13 January 1929. According to Dr. W.S. Aldridge, president of the Lake Worth Garden Club in the 1920s-1930, "Cielito Lindo's grounds were an outstanding example of the art of landscape gardener. The division and layout of the gardens are as beautiful as the rare plants and decorative carved stonework they contain."

fountains and benches, all overseen by the estate's gardener and superintendent E.E. Sheldon.¹³

The 1929 stock market crash and ensuing Great Depression had little effect on the Woolworth fortune. Jessie's inheritance from the Woolworth fortune allowed the Donahue's to lead lavish lifestyles. Even after the untimely death of her husband James in 1931, Jessie continued to host grand parties at Cielito Lindo. Jessie Donahue continued to spend the winter season in Palm Beach. Though she had the means to run a large estate, there were several years during the 1930s and early 1940s Jessie chose to spend the season at Whitehall, the Everglades Club or aboard her yacht, and open Cielito Lindo only for her large celebrated parties. When Cielito Lindo was not open, Jessie did not want for a place to entertain, as she was a member of all of the fashionable clubs in Palm Beach and also frequently entertained at her beach house.¹⁴

At the end of World War II, Jessie Donahue was ready to downsize her Palm Beach winter residence and consequently put Cielito Lindo up for sale. In 1946, she sold the house and property to developers for \$101,000.¹⁵ At that time, many owners saw their large estates as anachronisms, too large to air-condition, too expensive to maintain, and too hard to staff. Within a few years, many of Palm Beach's great estates including Playa Riente, El Mirasol, Casa Bendita, The Towers, Casa Florencia, Casa Joseto and La Fontana were demolished, making way for housing developments and high-rise condominiums.¹⁶

Most in Palm Beach assumed that Cielito Lindo would meet the same fate. However, architect Byron Simonson, who had been a draftsman and designer for Addison Mizner and Maurice Fatio, devised a plan to subdivide the property into the nineteen-lot Boulevard Estates subdivision and then subdivide the Cielito Lindo estate into five residences. The January 11, 1949 article in Palm Beach Life describes this achievement:

¹³ Three separate building permits were taken out April 11, 1927 for some of the outbuildings; #668 for the Gardner and Chauffeur House \$18,000; #669 Garage and Service Building \$35,000 and #670 for the Boat House \$10,000.

¹⁴ Jessie Woolworth Donahue belonged to the Everglades Club, Bath and Tennis Club, Seminole Club, and the Gulf Stream Club,

¹⁵ At the time of the sale and subdivision of Cielito Lindo, the Donahue family retained the oceanfront lots east of Ocean Boulevard with its luxurious beach house and kept a corner of the property on the southwest corner of Ocean Boulevard and Woodbridge Road as a site for a guesthouse. Jessie Donahue took an Everglades Club apartment for her winter residence. There were plans drawn for a guesthouse but it was not constructed.

¹⁶ Donald W. Curl. Mizner's Florida: American Resort Architecture. New York: Architectural History Foundation, 1984; page 203.

How a very large mansion in Palm Beach was snatched from the jaws of house wrecking machinery a few years ago and divided into five villas, creating what is known today as the Ocean Boulevard Estates, is an architectural feat worthy of notice. The very large mansion partitioned into five smaller ones this past year was once the home of Mrs. James P. Donahue. Erected in the twenties, it was known in Palm Beach and New York society columns as “Cielito Lindo,” the scene of sumptuous social affairs and one of the most charming villas of Palm Beach’s Ocean Boulevard.

The three-day sale of household goods was believed to mark Cielito Lindo’s swan song with the large acreage being divided into 19 lots with a road running through the mansions 60-foot living room. Instead, through an outstanding venture in preservation and the architectural ingenuity of Byron F. Simonson of Simonson and Holley, a proposal to erect five graceful dwellings by partitioning the house and auxiliary buildings, was accepted and work begun last year. Dining halls became living rooms in the partitioning, servant’s quarters were converted to bedrooms, and even incinerator flu became a fireplace large enough to burn 12-foot logs. Bedrooms were fashioned from loggias and entire kitchens from the laundry of the large house. In every instance something old becoming something new in the skillful partition of a mansion.

Now stands on the site of the great Spanish-Moorish castle five smaller ones. All Cielito Lindo thus divided into five parts produced charming and intimate smaller villas, picturesquely dotting a broad expanse stretching from ocean to lake along Kings Road on in the new Ocean Boulevard Estates.¹⁷

Byron Simonson’s design to partition the grand estate into five stand-alone residences included transforming Cielito Lindo’s culinary wing into the residence at 127 Kings Road. The partitioning and renovations to the residence were done by the contracting firm of Smith, Yetter and Griffin Construction for a cost of \$20,000 in 1947. Smith, Yetter & Griffin were also the owners of Boulevard Estate, Inc., having purchased the former Cielito Estate from William M. Greve in March of 1947.¹⁸

¹⁷ The five houses are located at 122, 123, 127, 137 and 145 Kings Road. 122 Kings Road, lot 17, includes the original tower, entrance hall and bedrooms. 123 Kings Road, lot 3, was the dining room and breakfast room. 127 Kings Road, lot 4, was the entire culinary department of the original mansion and the fireplace was once the incinerator flu. 137 Kings Road, lot 5, was originally the five-car garage and laundry building. 145 Kings Road, lot 6, was converted from the chauffeur’s house.

¹⁸ Smith, Yetter & Griffin bought and developed much property in Palm Beach along with being contractors for major projects in Palm Beach and around the country. They previously worked with Simonson & Holley as the contractors for the Colony Hotel. They were Palm Beach based with their offices located at 337 Worth Avenue in the 1940’s.

Since the subdivision of Cielito Lindo, 127 Kings Road has had several residents. The first residents were Curt and Elizabeth Forstmann. Curt Forstmann was the chairman of the board and president of the Forstmann Woolen Company, who were international leaders in the woolen textile field. Curt Forstmann passed away in 1950 after which the home was purchased by Homer and Virginia Smith. The Smith's lived in the house for two years before moving to a home on South Ocean Boulevard. Subsequent owners of the home included Cellan Rorick, Robert Wickser, and Joseph Hendry Jr., Henry Madsen, William Spear and Dr. Albert Depalow. The current owners, James and Angie McNamara, have been the longest owners of the residence. The McNamara's purchased the home in February 1984 from the Depalow's and have been very good stewards of the residence for over 35 years.

V. Architects and Builder's Biography

Marion Sims Wyeth

Marion Sims Wyeth was as one of Palm Beach's foremost architects in a career that spanned over fifty years. Wyeth was noted for his "quiet, subdued and rational" interpretations of both the Spanish and Italian styles. With Addison Mizner, Maurice Fatio, Joseph Urban and John Volk, he is credited with creating the "Palm Beach Style".

Wyeth was born in 1889 in New York, a son of Florence Nightingale Sims and Dr. John Allan Wyeth. Dr. Wyeth was a Civil War poet, surgical pioneer, and founder of New York's Polyclinic Hospital, the first postgraduate medical school in the United States. Marion's grandfather, Dr. James Marion Sims, founded the field of gynecology and the first woman's hospital in history. Marion Sims Wyeth began his architectural studies at Princeton University and completed his classic training at the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris in 1914. At the time, the École was considered the one of the finest schools in the world. It was a style of education based on studying the classics, mostly Roman architecture. After completing school, Wyeth served as secretary to the U.S. Ambassador in Rome. Upon his return to New York, Wyeth became associated with the architectural offices of Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue and later with Carrere and Hastings, the firm that designed Whitehall for Henry Flagler.

Arriving in Palm Beach at the age of 30, Wyeth met with immediate success. From 1920, Wyeth shared a New York office with Frederic Rhineland King,

a friend from his student days in Paris, until 1934 when they formalized the relationship with the Wyeth and King partnership. William Royster Johnson joined Wyeth's Palm Beach office as a draftsman in 1924. In 1944 he became a partner and the firm name changed to Wyeth, King and Johnson. Over the years, the firm designed buildings ranging from Mediterranean Revival to classical Georgian, French, and Colonial styles.

The socially popular Wyeth was a prolific craftsman and more than 100 of his designs have graced the Island, including eight built on El Brillo Way. Some of his well-known Palm Beach designs include Qui Si Sana, Casa Juanita, Hogarcito, Casa de Los Arcos, Vita Serena, Southwood and the Betheseda by the Sea rectory. His largest and most impressive project was Cielito Lindo, a 45,000-square-foot Spanish Moorish-Revival-style mansion built for James Donohue and Jessie Woolworth Donohue in 1927. In 1946-1947, it was sold to developers, who split the property and created five houses. And while Joseph Urban is credited with Mar-a-Lago, Wyeth's association with the project was essential for its original design and completion. Wyeth also had an impressive list of prominent works outside of Palm Beach. Some of these include Good Samaritan Hospital and the Norton Gallery of Art in West Palm Beach, the Governor's Mansion in Tallahassee, and Doris Duke's Shangri La in Honolulu.

Wyeth served as a trustee of the Society of the Four Arts (1936-1969) and as its president (1956-1961). He became the first Palm Beach architect to be elected a fellow of the American Institute of Architecture in 1954, and received the Test of Time Award from its Palm Beach Chapter in 1981. Marion Sims Wyeth passed away in 1982 at the age of 93.

Byron Frederick Simonson

Byron Simonson was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on December 9, 1902. He attended Milwaukee State Teachers College from 1920 – 1923. He then attended the Chicago Institute of Fine and Applied Arts and the Ray School of Design for a year. Simonson moved to Palm Beach and served as chief draftsman for Addison Mizner from 1924-1925 and again from 1930-1933. Between that time he was a designer for York & Sawyer in New York. From 1933-1942, Simonson was the chief designer for Treanor and Fatio. On April 28, 1944, Simonson applied to the State of Florida licensure as an architect, which was granted with certificate #AR0001418 on January 11, 1945. Upon receiving his Florida architectural license, Byron Simonson formed a partnership with Maurice E. Holley, which thrived until they dissolved the

partnership in 1949, at which time he began to practice under his own name. He acquired a N.C.A.R.B. certification and was active in the Palm Beach Chapter of the A.I.A.¹⁹

Byron Simonson's most prominent work in Palm Beach is the Colonial Revival style Colony Hotel he designed in 1946-1947. In the 1950's he "renounced the arches and columns of classical styles" for Mid-Century Modernism. The former La Coquille Club in Manalapan was considered a modernist masterpiece popular with the jet set and for a time put Simonson in the top tier of Palm Beach's society architects.²⁰ Built in 1952 for Spelman Prentice, John D. Rockefeller's grandson, "the club's flat-roofed buildings were so stunningly avant-garde that the year after it opened, awed Florida AIA members held their meeting at the club and high society loved its minimalist elegance."²¹ Simonson became one of the areas most prominent modern architects in the post-war building boom of the 1950s but unfortunately most of his Palm Beach houses were torn down after modernism fell out of favor locally in the 1980s.

Byron and Frances Simonson had two children, Dawn and Byron Douglas. The Simonson family summered at their Tioga Coach House in Sapphire Valley, North Carolina where Byron also designed a number of houses. Byron Simonson passed away in 1972.

Builders Biography - William Watt, Jr.

William Watt, Jr. was a winter resident of Palm Beach since 1928. Mr. Watt was the founder of Watt & Sinclair of New York, a construction firm that built many buildings in Manhattan as well as numerous houses in Oyster Bay (NY), Red Bank (NJ) and Palm Beach.²²

William Watt first came to Palm Beach at the request of Jessie Woolworth Donahue in 1927 to supervise the construction of her Palm Beach villa, Cielito Lindo, designed by Marion Sims Wyeth. Watt was the builder for the Woolworth Building in New York City that Jessie's father F.W. Woolworth

¹⁹ N.C.A.R.B is the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards.

²⁰ The La Coquille Club was demolished in 1985 to make room for the Ritz Hotel (now Eau Palm Beach).

²¹ Augustus Mayhew, New York Social Diary.

²² The Woolworth Building at 233 Broadway in New York City was designed by Cass Gilbert and constructed by Watts and Sinclair for five-and-dime store magnate F.W. Woolworth in 1913. When the magnificent terra-cotta building opened it was dubbed "the Cathedral of Commerce" and at 792 feet was the tallest building in the world until 1930.

commissioned in 1913. Cass Gilbert was the architect for the terra-cotta building that was dubbed “The Cathedral of Commerce” and at 792 feet was the tallest building in the world until 1930.

In 1939, the firm of Watt and Sinclair moved to Palm Beach and the Watt family became permanent winter residents of Palm Beach. Their house on Jungle Road was designed by Palm Beach architect William Johnson. Associated with leading architects of the area, Mr. Watt’s firm planned and built many residences in Palm Beach. One of Mr. Watt’s closest associates was Maurice Fatio, and together they designed and built a number of residential and commercial buildings.

Mr. Watt planned and supervised the building of the Morrison Field to serve as West Palm Beach’s Airport. When World War II was declared, he expanded the field to buildings for what was to become the ferrying base for the Air Transport Command. As a military base, Morrison Field became a port of embarkments for Army Air Force bomber crews headed for North Africa and England.

Mr. Watt was a successful developer and social member of the winter colonists with memberships to both the Everglades Club and the Bath and Tennis Club.

VI. Statement of Significance

127 Kings Road is significant as one of the earliest acts of historic preservation in Palm Beach where a great estate was divided and adaptively reused rather than demolished. It is an evocative remaining part of the grand Cielito Lindo estate and its Mediterranean Revival architecture with Moorish influence is an excellent example of the style and a notable work of Marion Sims Wyeth.

VII. Criteria For Designation

Section 54-161 of the Town of Palm Beach Landmarks Preservation Ordinance outlines the criteria for designation of a landmark or landmark site and suggests that at least one criterion must be met to justify the designation. Listed below are the criteria which relate to this property and justification for designation:

(1) “Exemplifies or reflects the broad cultural, political, economic or social history of the nation, state, county or town.”

127 Kings Road reflects the broad cultural, economic and social history of the Town of Palm Beach. Cielito Lindo was built at a time when many of the wealthiest people in America came to Palm Beach for the warm winter season and built palatial estates to live in opulence and entertain guests with magnificent parties. Jessie Woolworth Donahue was one of the wealthiest women in the United States when she commissioned Cielito Lindo and she did not spare any expense in the design of the house and grounds or in the parties she hosted.

127 Kings Road also reflects the post World War II era when numerous owners of Palm Beach’s grand estates sold their properties to developers who subsequently demolished the estates that had become too costly to maintain. Fortunately, the subdividing of Cielito Lindo was an innovative project where the estate was portioned rather than demolished and a road was constructed through the middle, making 127 Kings Road a fine example of adaptive reuse.

(3) “Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type or is a specimen inherently valuable for the study of a period, style, method of construction or use of indigenous materials or craftsmanship.”

127 Kings Road is an excellent example of the Mediterranean Revival style architecture popularized in Palm Beach during the Land Boom of the 1920s and still recognized as the “Palm Beach Style.” The Moorish influences that Marion Sims Wyeth incorporated into the design enhance the exotic nature of the style, and the preservation and re-use of significant design elements from the original estate into the design of 127 Kings Road enriches the style of the residence. Furthermore, the partitioning of the Donahue’s grand estate Cielito Lindo into five separate residences is an example of a method of construction that is valuable for study.

(4) “Is representative of the notable work of a master builder, designer or architect whose individual ability has been recognized or who influenced his age.”

Marion Sims Wyeth was as one of Palm Beach’s foremost architects in a career that spanned over fifty years. More than 100 of his designs have graced the Island and many consider Cielito Lindo to be Wyeth’s most impressive

work of his career. Though 127 Kings Road is just a portion of the original estate, it is still evocative of the original design and a notable representation of Wyeth's work.

Byron F. Simonson was a Palm Beach architect who had worked for both Addison Mizner and Maurice Fatio before designing the Colony Hotel, his largest Palm Beach commission. It was Simonson's architectural ingenuity to partition Cielito Lindo into five houses and create the Ocean Boulevard Estates subdivision with Kings Road running through the middle.

VIII. Selected Bibliography

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Knott, James R. Palm Beach Revisited: Historical Vignettes of Palm Beach County. Palm Beach Post: The Best of the Brown Wrappers I, 1987.

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Roberts, Mary Fanton. "Cielito Lindo" Arts & Decoration Magazine, Volume XXIX, Number 3, July 1928.

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Thuma, Cynthia. Images of America: Palm Beach Vintage Postcards. Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2001.

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IX. Florida Master Site File Form



HISTORICAL STRUCTURE FORM

Electronic Version 1.1.0

Site # PB06558
 Recorder # Jane S. Day
 Field Date 9/25/2010
 Form Date 9/29/2010
 Form No 201009
 Form No = Field Date (YYYYMM)

First Site Form Recorded for this Site? NO

GENERAL INFORMATION

Site Name (address if none) James J. McNamara, House Multiple Listing (DHR only) _____
 Other Names _____ >> Villa Serena
 Survey or Project Name Palm Beach Historic Sites Survey, Phase V Survey# _____
 National Register Category Building(s)

LOCATION & IDENTIFICATION

Address

Street No.	Direction	Street Name	Street Type	Direction Suffix
<u>127</u>		<u>Kings</u>	<u>Road</u>	

 Cross Streets (nearest/between) S. Ocean Blvd. & Lake Worth
 City / Town (within 3 miles) Town of Palm Beach In Current City Limits? YES
 County Palm Beach Tax Parcel #(s) 50-43-43-35-02-000-0040
 Subdivision Name Blouvard Estates Block _____ Lot 4
 Ownership Private Individual
 Name of Public Tract (e.g., park) _____
 Route to (especially if no street address) On the north side of Kings Road between South Ocean Blvd. and Lake Worth. It is behind 123 Kings Rd

MAPPING

USGS 7.5' Map Name _____ Publication Date _____ >> PALM BEACH;1983
 Township: _____ Range: _____ Section: _____ 1/4 section: _____ >> 43S ;43E ;35;UNSP
 Irregular Section Name: _____
 Landgrant _____
 UTM: Zone _____ Easting _____ Northing _____
 Plat or Other Map (map's name, location) _____

DESCRIPTION

Style Mediterranean Revival Other Style _____
 Exterior Plan Irregular Other Exterior Plan _____
 Number of Stories 3
 Structural System(s) _____ >> Hollow clay tile
 Other Structural System(s) _____
 Foundation Type(s) _____ >> Unspecified by recorder
 Other Foundation Types _____
 Foundation Material(s) _____ >> Unspecified
 Other Foundation Material(s) _____
 Exterior Fabric(s) _____ >> Stucco
 Other Exterior Fabric(s) _____
 Roof Type(s) _____ >> Hip
 Other Roof Type(s) _____
 Roof Material(s) _____ >> Barrel tile
 Other Roof Material(s) _____
 Roof Secondary Structure(s) (dormers etc) _____ >> Flat extension
 Other Roof Secondary Structure(s) _____
 Number of Chimneys 1
 Chimney Material Other
 Other Chimney Material(s) stucco
 Chimney Location(s) west exterior

HISTORICAL STRUCTURE FORM

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DESCRIPTION (continued)

Window Descriptions casement

Main Entrance Description (stylistic details) recessed front interior, with Moorish details

Porches: #open 2 #closed #fincised Location(s) front, second floor

Porch Roof Types(s) open

Exterior Ornament exposed rafters, shutters, ornate carved entry door

Interior Plan Unknown

Other Interior Plan

Condition Good

Structure Surroundings

Commercial: NONE of this category

Residential: ALL this category

Institutional: NONE of this category

Undeveloped: NONE of this category

Ancillary Features (Number / type of outbuildings, major landscape features)

Archaeological Remains (describe): none observed

If archaeological remains are present, was an Archaeological Site Form completed?

Narrative Description (optional)

HISTORY

Construction year 1927

Architect (last name first): Wyeth, Marion Sims

Builder (last name first): unknown

Changes in Locations or Conditions

Type of Change	Year of Change	Date Change Noted	Description of Changes
>>			

Structure Use History

Use Year Use Started Year Use Ended >> Private residence; 1927;

Other Structure Uses

Ownership History (especially original owner, dates, profession, etc.)

RESEARCH METHODS

Research Methods >> Examine local property records

Other research methods

SURVEYOR'S EVALUATION OF SITE

Potentially Eligible for a Local Register? INSUFF. INFO

Name of Local Register if Eligible

Individually Eligible for National Register? NO

Potential Contributor to NR District? YES

Area(s) of historical significance

>> Architecture

Other Historical Associations

Explanation of Evaluation (required) This Mediterranean Revival residence has exceptional Moorish details such as the decorative masonry roof line, balustrade and scalloped fascia. It is a good representation of Boom Times architecture.

HISTORICAL STRUCTURE FORM

8PB06558

DOCUMENTATION (Photos, Plans, etc.)

Photographic Negatives or Other Collections Not Filed with FMSF, including Field Notes, Plans, other Important Documents.

Document type: _____ Maintaining Organization: _____
 File or Accession #: _____ Descriptive Information: _____
 >> _____

RECORDER INFORMATION

Recorder Name (Last, First) Day, Jane S.
 Recorder Address / Phone 1014 NW 6th Drive, Boca Raton, Florida 33486, 561-447-2956
 Recorder Affiliation Research Atlantica Other Affiliation Town of Palm Beach
 Is a Text-Only Supplement File Attached (Surveyor Only)? _____

***** MASTER SITE FILE USE ONLY *****

Cultural Resource Type: <u>SS</u> Electronic Form Used: <u>8110</u> Form Type Code: <u>FORM</u> Form Quality Ranking: <u>NEW</u> Form Status Code: <u>SCAT</u> Supplement Information Status: <u>NO SUPPLEMENT</u> Supplement File Status: <u>NO SUPPLEMENT FILE</u> Form Comments: _____ _____ _____	SHPO's Evaluation of Resource _____ Date _____ FMSF Staffer: _____ Computer Entry Date: <u>7/13/2004</u>
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REQUIRED PAPER ATTACHMENTS

- (1) USGS 7.5" MAP WITH STRUCTURE PINPOINTED IN RED
- (2) LARGE SCALE STREET OR PLAT MAP
- (3) PHOTO OF MAIN FACADE, B&W, AT LEAST 3"X5"